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DESCRIPTORS Expository Writing; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Measures (Individuals); Middle Schools; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Skills; Reading Tests; *Word Recognition
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ABSTRACT

Designed to be used along with a multiple-choice instrument for further assessment of the immediate and delayed comprehension of a 1,300 word expository passage on the Kalahari Desert, the instrument is a 35-item posttest, divided into five clusters, each composed of six to eight lettered phrases. Twenty verbatim phrases from the passage are scattered randomly throughout the clusters. The other 15 phrases do not imitate the wording of the passage and are not true according to the passage or general knowledge of the topic. Subjects are asked to circle the letters of any phrases occurring in the text. Validity, reliability, and normative data are included. (This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Intruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, Volume 2," published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. The TRIP review, included here as an introduction to the instrument, describes the instrument's category (reading comprehension), title, author, date, age range (middle school/junior high), purpose, and physical characteristics.) (JL)

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ED236655

An Instrument for Assessing Comprehension through the Ability to Recognize Verbatim Phrases from Previously Read Expository Prose.

The measurement instruments contained in this document have been reviewed in a monograph (cited below) edited by William T. Fagan, Charles Cooper, and Julie Jensen, for The Research Instruments Project (TRIP), and funded by a grant from the Trustees of the NCTE Research Foundation:

Measures for Research and Evaluation
in the
English Language Arts
Volume II

The purpose of the editors has been to select and review measurement instruments pertaining to all aspects of research and evaluation in the English language arts, e.g. language and language development, literacy, literature, reading (including comprehension, teacher-pupil interaction, etc.), writing, and teacher knowledge and attitudes. In order to make some of the actual instruments reviewed more readily available, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) has cooperated with the editors by processing selected instruments into the ERIC system (see the 42 documents assigned Clearinghouse accession numbers CS 207 904-945).

CS207930

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Category: Reading Comprehension

Title: An Instrument for Assessing Comprehension through the Ability to Recognize Verbatim Phrases from Previously Read Expository Prose

Author: Petey Young

Age Range: Middle school/Junior high

Description of Instrument:

Purpose: To be used along with a multiple-choice instrument for further assessment of the immediate and delayed comprehension of a 1300-word expository passage.

Date of Construction: 1980

Physical Description: A thirty-five item post-test, divided into five clusters, each composed of six to eight, lettered phrases, 20 verbatim phrases for a 1300-word passage on the Kalahari Desert were scattered randomly. The other fifteen phrases did not imitate the wording of the passage nor were they true according to the passage or to further knowledge of the topic. Instructions were to circle the letters of any phrases that occurred in the text. The selection of verbatim phrases was based on an analysis of the passage made by using Turner and Greene's (1977) directions for following Kintsch's (1974) system of discourse analysis. The analysis was made to yield three increasingly detailed levels of information by collapsing any more detailed levels to the third level. An equal number of verbatim phrases was then chosen from each level. This way general, interrelated information was emphasized but specific, isolated bits of information were not completely neglected.

Validity, Reliability, and Normative Data:

To ascertain whether or not the content or style of the wording signalled the correct responses the instrument was administered to a group which did not read the passage but were told it was about the Kalahari Desert and given the task of guessing which phrases were actually in the story. To validate and revise the instrument, the performances of this group were compared to the performances of a group which read the passage and then took the test. The second group outperformed the first at a $p < .001$ level of significance. The test was revised by deleting items answered correctly by a significant number of the first group and incorrectly by a significant number of the second group. The Hoyt reliability of the group which read the passage was high, 0.80. When the instrument was used along with a 40-item multiple-choice test to gather data, treatment groups outperformed control groups on the phrase-recognition test at a $p < .001$ level of significance on both the immediate and delayed administrations in two studies involving 240 seventh graders. Pearson product-moment correlations found between the phrase-recognition test and the multiple-choice test scores ranged from .27 to .68 in the treatment and control groups. The moderate positive correlations indicate the two tests measured related, but not identical abilities.

Related References:

Kintsch, W. The representation of meaning in memory. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1974.

Turner, A. & Greene, E. The construction and use of a propositional text base (Technical Report No. 63). Boulder, Colorado: Institute for the Study of Intellectual Behavior, University of Colorado, 1977.

Young, P. Effect of inference-making aids on poor readers' comprehension (Technical Report No. 555). Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Individualized Schooling, 1980. (ED 193 607)

DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENT

Phrase-Recognition Test

-Correct answers are circled.

-Information from items marked D was deleted in the revised version used for data collection.

NAME _____

Recognition Test

1. Circle the letters of the ones that occurred in the text:

(a) As adults, they are 4 1/2 to just over 5-feet tall

(b) a huge, 200-foot Baobab tree

c. thorn fences surround the Bushman camp

d. a leopard tortoise digging a sip well

(e) a great stretch of dry land

f. Rain never comes to the thirsty desert soil

(g) find water where no one else would think to look

h. a land of few rivers

2. Circle the letters of the ones that occurred in the text:

(a) the water holes completely dry up

b. antelopes are hunted with clubs

(c) dig into underground burrows of animals

D - d. traditional clothing is decorated with zig-zags

(e) a carefully placed row of ostrich eggshells

(f) Each band has its territory

(g) an environment of little water and high temperatures

h. hot nights and clear desert air all year long

3. Circle the letters of the ones that occurred in the text:

a. little children help by catching birds

(b) sucks water through the reed

D - c. telling stories about the moon and the stars

(d) small, cone-shaped houses made of sticks and grass

(e) The tortoise is baked in the shell

f. herds of animals tended by the Bushmen

(g) Over 100 kinds of plants are gathered for food

D - h. people leave the desert in their search for water

4. Circle the letters of the ones that occurred in the text:

D -a. the language spoken by the Bushmen is very unusual

b. large birds called vultures are seen swooping across the desert

(c) seek a drink or store water in surprising places

(d) Mongongo nuts are a major part of the Bushman diet

e. the bands fight each other fiercely for new territory

f. all food comes from animals killed by the Bushman hunters

(g) file iron pieces into points for arrowheads

h. Small holes are made in the sand for sleeping

5. Circle the letters of the ones that occurred in the text:

(a) once lived on the rich grasslands of South Africa

(b) venom of the deadly snake, the mamba

(c) find the dried-up leaves of the plant and dig

D -d. lions stalking zebras at dawn

(e) Any water left standing freezes at night

f. The hot, dry mountains of the desert

g. skerms and werfs eaten by the Bushmen

h. crops planted in the hot sun by the women and children

(Passage for control groups C1 and C2)

THE KALAHARI DESERT

In southwestern Africa there is a great stretch of dry land. The land is flat with no lakes or rivers. Vegetation is scarce. The plants and animals that live here have adapted to an environment with little water and high temperatures. This land is the Kalahari Desert. The Kalahari Desert covers part of three nations of southern Africa.

The plants of the Kalahari have adapted to the desert environment. Most of these plants are grasses and bushes. However, every now and then across the barren desert a huge, 200-foot baobab tree is seen. Its great, thick branches reach like stretching arms into the sky. The bark is thick and smooth, and sags in folds toward the bottom of the tree. The tree is adapted to the hot, dry climate because it is able to store water in the spongy wood of its huge trunk. Some of the other desert plants store water in large underground roots. Many rest as seeds until the rainy season. The seeds cannot germinate without water, but, when the rain falls, the seeds can finally sprout.

The desert is without rain for almost 10 months of the year. A hot, dry wind blows across the desert most of the time. During the two cool months, June and July, the bushes and grass are covered with frost at dawn. Any water left standing freezes at night. Days warm slowly to around 80 degrees, but the cold returns at night.

Rains come at last to the Kalahari in December, January, and February. At this time, holes in the ground fill with water, and small ponds form. All of the desert life becomes active with the coming of the rains. The grass turns green, and new leaves and

blossoms appear on the bushes. Flowering plants add bright colors to the desert scene. Much of the plant life sprouts from seeds that have rested while waiting for moisture. The plants bud, blossom, and bear their seeds quickly, for the season is short. The animals of the Kalahari graze on the new, tender plants brought to life by the long-awaited rains.

In March the drought, or dry time, returns. When the rains stop, the water holes start to dry up. They become slippery mud and then caked white earth. By June only little water holes which are deep in the ground and covered with long grass are left. These water holes are miles apart, and travel in the desert is nearly impossible when the water holes completely dry up in August.

To adapt to the desert environment, the animals, like plants, face the task of finding and storing water. Some desert animals seek a drink or store water in surprising places. Lizards and insects often lap dew at daybreak. Dew is tiny drops of water formed at night when it is cool. Desert tortoises carry extra body water around with them in two sacs under their upper shell. These sacs serve as two canteens for the tortoises. Many birds, such as the ostrich, and grass eaters, such as the antelope, travel across the desert to water holes. When times are very dry they often seek water outside the desert.

The Kalahari Desert is the home of people called Bushmen. The Bushmen are rather small people. As adults, they are four and one-half

to just over five-feet tall. These people once lived on the rich grasslands of South Africa. In a struggle with cattle-raising peoples for the grasslands, the Bushmen were driven north. They found safety on the Kalahari, and as a hunting and gathering people still live as the earliest people on earth once did.

Because of the harsh desert conditions, the Bushmen do not plant crops or herd animals. Instead, they gather roots, berries, and nuts, and hunt animals. When the water holes in one place are dry and little food remains, the Bushmen must move to a new place. In their search for food and water, these people must move a great deal. They do not stay in one spot, but migrate from place to place. Such people are called nomads.

Where food and water can be found, a band of about 20 Bushmen set up a werf, which is their word for camp. A visitor could probably walk through the werf without knowing it because the small, cone-shaped houses made of sticks and grass look much like bushes. The Bushmen live in these skerms, which give them shade during the day and shelter from the cool winds at night. Near the houses is a carefully placed row of ostrich eggshells, often decorated with carved designs of zigzags and diamonds, or animal pictures. The eggshells are important because they hold water. Each one is filled through a hole cut in the shell. The hole is then stopped up with grass.

The main task of desert survival is finding food and water. The Bushmen know the land well. When the water holes dry up, the Bushmen must search for new sources of water. A Bushman can find water where

no one else would think to look. He might walk a few feet to a little bush and pull out a tsama melon. He would make a hole in the top, mash the insides with a stick, and then drink the good juice. Other plants such as the bi and ga roots and the wild cucumber may be eaten for their juice. Another way a Bushman can get water is from sip wells. In some places, rain water is held in the moist sand. The water is three to four feet from the surface. He digs into the sand with a reed, which is a kind of grass with a hollow stem like a drinking straw. He sucks water through the reed and then stores the water in an ostrich eggshell. The Bushman works hard to get this necessity for survival.

The women and children gather fruit and nuts. Meat makes up only a small part of the food that the Bushmen eat. The Bushmen cannot always depend on animals as they can on plants. Over 100 kinds of plants are gathered for food. These include roots, bulbs, berries, other fruits, nuts, and leafy greens. The most important of these food plants is the mongongo nut. Mongongo nuts are a major part of the Bushman diet.

Early each morning, some of the women and children go to gather plants. The sun is not yet up, but it is already hot on the Kalahari. Some mornings, they have to walk many miles over the dry grass before they find anything. A digging stick, usually a tall, pointed branch, is used by the women. With this, they break the sunbaked earth and free the roots or plants to be gathered. Back at the werf, a shallow

wooden bowl, called a stamping block, is used to mash seeds and nuts.

Early in the morning, the hunters are busy too. They must prepare their arrows before they go. First, the hunters file iron pieces into points for arrowheads. The arrowheads are carefully tied onto split sticks and then smeared with a poison that will kill the animals. This poison is made from bark or roots and the dried insect larvae of the ngoa moth. Sometimes, the venom of the deadly snake, the mamba, is used. The arrows are stuck, points upward, into the sand until the poison dries. The men are now ready for the hunt.

Antelopes and other large animals are regularly hunted with poisoned arrows. The Bushmen hunt smaller animals in other ways. Sometimes they dig into the underground burrows of animals like the springhares. The hunters hook the animal with a metal hook that is attached to a long pole. Then they dig up the soft sand to capture it.

Another animal that is hunted for food is the big leopard tortoise. This tortoise weighs up to eight pounds. It is easily caught by men, women, or children. The tortoise is baked in the shell and can feed a family of four.

The Bushmen do not wander across the whole desert alone. To survive, they live together in small bands. Each band has its territory, which includes a water hole and a vast stretch of land around it. Each band must ask permission to cross another band's territory. When a band moves, it goes to another place in its own territory.

Arranging the land into territories helps create order in a hunting and gathering culture. The people of the band know their territory well. The hunters know where game can be found in certain seasons and times of the day. In dry times, they know where to look for sip wells. Remembering where a green plant grew during the rainy season, Bushmen know where to look for food at a later time. They find the dried-up leaves of the plant and dig into the ground for its roots.

blossoms appear on the bushes. Flowering plants add bright colors to the desert scene. Much of the plant life sprouts from seeds that have rested while waiting for moisture. The plants bud, blossom, and bear their seeds quickly, for the season is short. The animals of the Kalahari graze on the new, tender plants brought to life by the long-awaited rains.

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---------- DO ACTIVITY SHEET A ----------

The Kalahari Desert is the home of people called Bushmen. The Bushmen are rather small people. As adults, they are four and one-half

(Sample page from the passage for treatment groups NA and GA)

no one else would think to look. He might walk a few feet to a little bush and pull out a tsama melon. He would make a hole in the top, mash the insides with a stick, and then drink the good juice. Other plants such as the bi and ga roots and the wild cucumber may be eaten for their juice. Another way a Bushman can get water is from sip wells. In some places, rain water is held in the moist sand. The water is three to four feet from the surface. He digs into the sand with a reed, which is a kind of grass with a hollow stem like a drinking straw. He sucks water through the reed and then stores the water in an ostrich eggshell. The Bushman works hard to get this necessity for survival.

---------- GET ACTIVITY SHEET B ----------

The women and children gather fruit and nuts. Meat makes up only a small part of the food that the Bushmen eat. The Bushmen cannot always depend on animals as they can on plants. Over 100 kinds of plants are gathered for food. These include roots, bulbs, berries, other fruits, nuts, and leafy greens. The most important of these food plants is the mongongo nut. Mongongo nuts are a major part of the Bushman diet.

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